

and I would be a poor stick if I could not provide for the needs of so small a family."

There was a general reconstruction of affairs. Those dear people agreed to my plans. I sold some odds and ends and placed enough in the bank to cover household expenses for six months ahead, and I set out to meet the world with a loving kiss from the dearest girl on earth, whose faith in my energy and ability was sublime.

I was idle in the big city for a month and affairs began to daunt me, but one day there came a flash of hope and fortune. I was walking dejectedly along the street when a hand slapped me briskly on the shoulder and a cheery voice spoke the words:

"The very man!"

I recognized Revell. I had not seen him for years but I recalled him as a former partner of my father.

"I am in on a great new trend," he advised me. "The balloon has had its day—now comes the airship. Heard of the big international meet at the aero grounds here? Well, I've got the latest in the biplane line and I'm an entrant for the great \$50,000 prize. Your name, Bertram is worth something, for your father is not forgotten. Come up to my hangar and I'll open your eyes to a fine business proposition."

I drifted into aviatics with this fascinating optimistic airman gradually. I could not resist his hopefulness and eloquence.

Revell had a superb biplane, the latest model in its line. Then there was a small monoplane for practice stunts. He initiated me into its possibilities. In a week I was a fair birdman.

I doubted our ability to compete successfully with experts from all over the world, and, indeed, in the end all we won was fifth place and a twenty per cent interest in a \$19,000 minor prize pool. However, at dusk one evening that happened which led to my abandonment of the perilous field of aviatics.

Revell had arranged for a night flight, he in the big machine and myself with the little monoplane. I had got into the pilot seat and started up, expecting him from the hangar at once. Just as the tail of my machine left the ground a man, a stranger, dashed up to the spot. He was in a frantic state of excitement.

He ended a sharp run in a daring spring that carried him clear over the wings and into the pit just back of the pilot post. The delicate mechanism of the monoplane shivered at the unusual shock. I was about to shut off the control when he leaned towards me, pressed the cold muzzle of a revolver to my temple and hissed out:

"Keep on going or I will kill you!"

I was conscious of shouts below, a blurred sense of Revell rushing out of the hangar, of uniformed men rushing to the spot. Then, fairly alarmed, I let the monoplane shoot up into space.

Then there happened a series of starts and thrills. A steady level attained, my grim passenger never lowered his weapon. He ordered me to proceed due north. Less than five miles accomplished, he let out a wild yell of dismay and rage.

Suddenly a great white glare shot up, down, narrowed in a steady circle to a direct focus, and as in a spot light picture we were nailed by the powerful headlight of the big biplane, the loyal, intelligent Revell at the pilot post in hot pursuit.

"Drop! drop!" panted my passenger. "They're after me. Drop, I tell you!"

"In that forest of trees?" I objected, glancing below. "Impossible!"

"Get lower, or I will shoot!" yelled my companion, and I volplaned till we were skidding twenty feet above the thick grove of trees.

My blood ran cold as the man jumped. I saw his outspread form strike the top of a towering titan of the forest. He crashed through the branches. The headlight followed his downward plunge. Then it focused